United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses hope that all detainees and hostages will be freed before Christmas.

- General Assembly adopts 22-power draft resolution on International Decade for Eradication of Colonialism.

- New Coordinator for United Nations Assistance for Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon to be appointed soon and assigned in Beirut.

- Deteriorating economic situation in occupied territory and need for broader donor base cited in Special Political Committee.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar told correspondents this morning that he had received "a kind of a promise" that all the detainees and hostages in Lebanon would be freed before Christmas. He said he hoped that everything would be resolved by that time.

In reply to questions by correspondents last night, the Secretary-General said he had spoken to his Delegate, Giandomenico Picco, after the release of Terry Waite and Thomas Sutherland, and that "everything is under control". He emphasized that he was continuing his diplomatic efforts, not only to free the Western hostages, including two German detainees, but also the Arabs who were held in the southern part of Lebanon. "I don't make differences between nationalities. It is a humanitarian effort", the Secretary-General said.

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The General Assembly adopted this morning a 22-Power draft resolution which would declare that the ultimate goal of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism is the exercise of the right to self-determination by the peoples of each and every one of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

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The Assembly was continuing its debate on the implementation of the Declaration on Decolonization.

By the draft, the Assembly would also declare that the exercise of the right to self-determination should be carried out "freely and without outside pressure in a form reflecting authentic interests and aspirations" of the peoples of the Territories, and with the United Nations playing an appropriate role.

One of the sponsors of the draft, Vanuatu's representative Robert Van Lierop, said his country supported the right of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to choose and determine their own fate in accordance with their own aspirations,whether or not they wished to become politically independent. He said the Decade would help to "shorten and ease the journey" of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The process of decolonization was also one of building respect for human rights, he said.

Yesterday, the Assembly decided to hold an international Health Forum in Accra, Ghana, from 4 to 6 December, to focus particularly on the health and economic situation of vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially women, in developing countries. It took that decision without a vote on the recommendation of its Second Committee (Economical and Financial).

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After a lapse of nearly two years, a new Coordinator for the United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon (UNARDOL) is being assigned in Beirut. An announcement of the appointment is expected to be made shortly. The UNARDOL Coordinator will also serve as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative to Lebanon.

The appointment is in line with other actions undertaken by the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to generate all possible assistance to help Lebanon in its reconstruction and development. Starting in March, Bettino Craxi, in his capacity as Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, was called on to assist in mobilizing resources to help the Government of Lebanon in its task. As a result of Mr. Craxi's efforts, assistance has been made available to Lebanon at the bilateral level to respond to some of the country's most urgent needs.

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The deterioration of the economic situation in the occupied territory and the need to broaden the Agency's donor was debated yesterday in the General Assembly's Special Political Committee as it was continuing consideration of the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Taking part in the debate, the representative of Sweden, Jan Eliasson, speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said the flow of evacuees to Jordan following the Gulf crisis had increased demands on UNRWA's services,

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while prolonged curfews in the West Bank and Gaza and the deterioration of the economic situation in the occupied territories and Jordan had tangibly affected the Agency's operations.

The Representative of Egypt, N.A. Elaraby, said that it was essential to view the activities of UNRWA "in its real context". The Agency had been established as a temporary body to provide for the basic needs of a population and a region in transition. Yet, today, he said, more than 20 years later, the need for the UNRWA's services was greater than ever.

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